SENATE BILL NO. 2485

AN ACT ENTITLED THE "MISSISSIPPI READING SUFFICIENCY ACT OF 2003; TO REQUIRE EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN THE 3RD AND 4TH GRADES TO BE ASSESSED FOR THE ACQUISITION OF READING SKILLS, AND TO REQUIRE A PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION FOR THOSE FOUND NOT TO BE READING AT THE APPROPRIATE GRADE LEVEL; TO PRESCRIBE THE COMPONENTS OF THE PLAN, TO PROVIDE FOR SCHOOL READING ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES, TO PROVIDE FOR TUTORING AND TO PROVIDE THAT COPIES OF THE ASSESSMENT SHALL BE MADE PART OF THE PERMANENT RECORD OF EACH STUDENT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Mississippi Reading Sufficiency Act of 2003."

SECTION 2. The purpose of the Mississippi Reading Sufficiency Act is to ensure that each child attains the necessary reading skills by completion of the Fourth Grade which will enable that student to continue development of reading skills and to succeed throughout school and life.

SECTION 3. (1) Beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, each student enrolled in Third and Fourth Grades of the public schools of this state shall be assessed by multiple on-going assessments for the acquisition of reading skills for the grade level in which that student is enrolled. Before the close of the current school year, any student, except for students who are on an individualized education program or have limited English proficiency, found not to be reading at the appropriate grade level shall be provided a reading assessment plan which will include a program of instruction in reading designed to enable the student to acquire the appropriate grade level of reading skills. The plan shall include, but not be limited to:
(a) Sufficient additional in-school instructional time for the development of reading and comprehension skills of the student;

(b) If necessary, tutorial instruction after regular school hours, on Saturdays and during summer; and

(c) Utilization of teaching methodologies, including phonics and other methodologies in wide practice, as is determined appropriate by the reading assessment committee.

The student shall be reassessed at the conclusion of the program of instruction. The program of instruction shall continue until the student is determined to be reading at or above grade level. The student may continue to progress to the next grade level while the tutorial reading instruction continues.

(2) Each school site shall establish a committee composed of educators, which if possible shall include a certified reading specialist, to determine the reading assessment plan for each student for whom one is necessary. A parent or guardian of the student shall be included in the development of the reading assessment plan for that student. Every school district shall adopt and annually update a district plan which includes a plan for each site and which outlines how each school site will comply with the provisions of the Mississippi Reading Sufficiency Act.

(3) For any Fourth Grade student not reading at that grade level as determined by multiple assessments including a nationally recognized reading assessment given mid-year, a new reading assessment plan shall be developed as specified in this section and implemented. In addition to other requirements of this act, the plan shall include specialized tutoring and may include a recommendation as to whether the student should be retained in the Fourth Grade at the close of that year.

(4) Copies of the results of the assessment administered pursuant to subsection (1) of this section shall be made a part of the permanent record of each student until the student is reading
on grade level so that the results of the next grade level
assessment can be measured against the previous grade level
results.

SECTION 4. Pursuant to appropriation by the Legislature
specifically for such purpose, the State Department of Education
shall provide in-service training, computer software and certified
reading instructor personnel for training local school district
certificated personnel to assist students and otherwise implement
the provisions of this act.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect and be in force from
and after July 1, 2003.